

Defense Distribution Center - Diversity

Rita Wiggins Completes White House Training in Women's Effective Leadership Program

Defense Distribution Depot Red River employee Rita Wiggins was recently selected to participate in a year long Women's Executive Leadership Program.

Wiggins has worked as Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist at DDRT.

The Women's Executive Leadership Program is one of several courses offered through USDA's Leadership Development Academy. The 12 month program focuses on developing leadership to strengthen individual and organizational performance and is open to male and female applicants.

The course curriculum combines leadership training with developmental opportunities. Program participants are allowed to tailor their assignments based on competencies they feel are needed to develop new or enhance existing managerial and leadership abilities.

"The Women's Executive Leadership Program has been a wonderful learning and growth experience for me. At the onset, we were given Leadership Effectiveness Inventory forms to be completed by ourselves, and anonymously by four of our peers and immediate supervisor. The data collected was used to identify preferred leadership styles along with leadership strengths and weaknesses to be worked on during the year," Wiggins said.

"While the results were really of no surprise to me, it was extremely helpful to have the professional and objective analysis made by the staff of how others view my personal preferred leadership style and how this style affects others. It was also highly beneficial to be given guidance and insight on the positive and negative impact my personal leadership/management style has on my personal effectiveness, she explained.

"The 1999-2000 program began in August 1999. Thus far we have attended training sessions on Conflict Management, Teambuilding, Effective Leadership, Facilitation Skills, Maintaining Balance, and Workforce Diversity. The training sessions have been conducted away from the worksite and all 1999-2000 program participants are required to attend," Wiggins explained.

"Each participant is also required to complete, at a minimum, one 30 day developmental and one 60 day developmental assignment, a five day 'shadowing' assignment, conduct several interviews with executives, participate in benchmarking sessions, and read three management book reviews on each," she said.

"Inasmuch as I had just accepted a detail to a new position when the program began, I chose to use my new assignment as Lead Production Controller in the Depot Support Office as the 30 day developmental assignment. The assignment worked out well and I learned a lot about the mission side of the house. The Chief and employees of the Support Office were great! While the assignment did not make me a subject matter expert, the diversity of the work I had exposure to - and the help given me by the employees I worked with - definitely provided a thorough understanding," she said.

"My first 60 day assignment was completed with the Department of the Army, Red River Army Depot, Community Support Office. The assignment provided me an opportunity to gain experience in the management related operations of Army Drug and Alcohol Prevention. Prevention Education is the linchpin that links all aspects of the community support program together and provides effective programming for the entire depot, to include the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). I planned and developed a broad training programming for the Red Ribbon and Drugged and Drunk Driving Campaign," Wiggins explained.

My second 60 day assignment began in April of this year in the White House. The assignment was in the Office of Presidential Personnel, Washington, D.C. as a Special Projects Manager. The assignment was indeed challenging." In addition, Wiggins completed two shadowing assignments. The first was with COL Maureen Clay, an Air Force officer with the Defense Contract Management Agency. "I first met COL Clay in a mediation environment and was impressed with her political savvy and creative thinking. The choice to shadow her was a wise one. She is a leader in every sense of the word. I hope to be like her when I grow up, and she has agreed to be a mentor for me," Wiggins related.

"My second shadowing assignment was with the Chair of the Texas Democratic Party, Ms. Molly Beth Malcolm. She is an exceptional manager and leader who exemplifies leadership capabilities I aspire to achieve." It was Rita Wiggins goal to complete other shadowing assignments within the scope of the program, such as LTC Randall J. Bockenstedt, DDRT Commander and Kirk Zachry, DDRT Deputy Commander.

"I am truly thankful to DDRT Management for nominating me for this training and for making the commitments necessary to allow me to have a successful year," Wiggins concluded.

